

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SIL-01 LAB-04 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7519

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

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USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ECON, EFIN, PINT

SUBJECT: DUTCH CABINET TROUBLES

REF: THE HAGUE 0594

1. DUTCH CABINET SEEMS TO HAVE SETTLED ISSUE OF WORKERS COUNCILS.
2. CABINET MEETING MORNING FEB 4 RESULTED MANY HOURS LATER IN COMPROMISE SOLUTION WITH WHICH ALL MINISTERS WERE SAID TO BE AGREED. AGREEMENT TURNED OUT TO BE SHORT-LIVED, HOWEVER, WHEN CATHOLIC JUSTICE MINISTER VAN AGT DISCOVERED THAT PRIME MINISTER DEN UYL HAD GIVEN PRESS CONFERENCE EXPLAINING COMPROMISE IN TERMS DIFFERENT FROM WHAT VAN AGT THOUGHT HAD BEEN AGREED TO. DUTCH PUBLIC, ALREADY WEARY AND NOT A LITTLE CONFUSED WITH GOINGS ON OVER THE PAST WEEK, WAS TREATED TO SPECTACLE OF MINISTER VAN AGT, WITH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TIGHTLY PURSED LIPS, VENTING HIS ANNOYANCE, ON DUTCH TELEVISION

EVENING FEB 4 COMMENTING THAT HE HAD NOT BEEN AWARE THAT THERE WOULD BE A PRESS CONFERENCE BUT SUPPOSED HE WOULD READ ABOUT IT IN THE PAPERS THE NEXT DAY.

3. DEN UYL, INDEFATIGABLE THOUGH TIRED, THEREUPON CONVOKED THE CABINET AGAIN ABOUT MIDNIGHT, AND MORNING REPORTS OF FEB 5 ARE THAT ISSUE HAS NOW BEEN SETTLED.

4. THE FEDERATION OF THE NETHERLANDS TRADE UNION MOVEMENT, A STRONG ADVOCATE OF WORKERS COUNCILS WITHOUT MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATION, HAS STATED IT IS "MOST SATISFIED" WITH THE OUTCOME. CATHOLIC FLOOR LEADER ANDRIESSEN HAS SAID HE IS PLEASED CABINET CRISIS HAS BEEN AVERTED. DEN UYL, ALSO PLEASED, HAS SAID, HOWEVER, THAT HE DOES NOT CONSIDER THE COMPROMISE THE END OF THE ROAD AND COMMENTED THAT YEARS OF WORK ARE STILL AHEAD. HE ALSO REVEALED THAT DURING PAST WEEK ALL CABINET MINISTERS HAD LOST FIVE OR SIX POUNDS.

5. COMMENT: IT IS LIKELY THAT CABINET HAS INDEED MANAGED TO OVERCOME THIS DIFFICULT HURDLE. GIVEN THE SEEMING INTRACTABILITY OF THE ISSUE, AND IN THE ABSENCE AT THE TIME OF WRITING OF SPECIFIC INFORMATION AS TO THE CONTENT OF THE COMPROMISE, THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE CABINET MAY YET HAVE TO GO UP THE HILL AND DOWN AGAIN ONCE MORE CANNOT BE EXCLUDED. WHAT STANDS OUT IS THAT STRONGLY FELT PRESSURES TO TAKE A STAND ON PRINCIPLE--A GREATER VOICE FOR WORKERS ON THE PART OF LABOR AND THE PPR, AND AN INSISTENCE ON MAINTAINING THE INFLUENCE OF MANAGEMENT AS WELL AS A DESIRE TO AVOID POLARIZATION ON THE PART OF THE CONFESSIONALS--WERE NOT POWERFUL ENOUGH TO OVERCOME THE EVEN STRONGER DESIRE ON THE PART OF THE CABINET TO HOLD TOGETHER AND NOT TO PRECIPITATE A GOVERNMENT CRISIS AT THIS TIME. THUS, CABINET HAS ONCE AGAIN DEMONSTRATED THAT IT IS EASIER TO DO THINGS TOGETHER THAN TO AGREE ON THE REASONS WHY.
GOULD

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